No. 9.

THE FREETHINKER'S

TEXT-BOOK.

EDITED BY

CHARLES BRADLAUGH, ANNIE BESANT, AND CHARLES WATTS.

PART II.

CHRISTIANITY.

BY ANNIE BESANT.

Issued by authority of the National Secular Society.

LONDON:
CHARLES WATTS, 84, FLEET STREET, E.C.

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external appearance from that of the Christians. They had both a most pompous and splendid ritual. Gorgeous robes, mitres, tiaras, wax-tapers, crosiers, processions, lustrations, images, gold and silver vases, and many such circumstances of pageantry, were equally to be seen in the heathen temples and the Christian churches" (Mosheim's "Eccles. Hist.," fourth century, p. 105). Says Dulaure: "These two Fathers [Justin and Tertullian] are in no fashion embarrassed by this astonishing resemblance; they both say that the devil, knowing beforehand of the establishment of Christianity, and of the ceremonies of this religion, inspired the Pagans to do the same, so as to rival God and injure Christian worship" ("Histoire Abrégée de Differens Cultes," t. i., p. 522; ed. 1825).

The idea of *angels and devils* has also spread from the far East; the Jews learned it from the Babylonians, and from the Jews and the Egyptians it passed into Christianity. The Persian theology had seven angels of the highest order, who ever surrounded Ormuzd, the good creator; and from this the Jews derived the seven archangels always before the Lord, and the Christians the "seven spirits of God" (Rev. iii. 1), and the "seven angels which stood before God" (Ibid, viii. 2). The Persians had four angels —one at each corner of the world; Revelation has "four angels standing on the four corners of the earth" (vii. 1). The Persians employed them as Mediators with the Supreme; the majority of Christians now do the same, and all Christians did so in earlier times. Origen, Tertullian, Chrysostom, and other Fathers, speak of angels as ruling the earth, the planets, etc. Michael is the angel of the Sun, as was Hercules, and he fights with and conquers the dragon, as Hercules the Python, Horus the monster Typhon, Krishna the serpent. The Persians believed in devils as well as in angels, and they also had their chief, Ahriman, the pattern of Satan. These devils—or dews, or devs—struggled against the good, and in the end would be destroyed, and Ahriman would be chained down in the abyss, as Satan in Rev. xx. Ahriman flew down to earth from heaven as a great dragon (Rev. xii. 3 and 9), the angels arming themselves against him (Ibid, verse 7). Strauss remarks: "Had the belief in celestial beings, occupying a particular station in the court of heaven, and distinguished by particular names, originated from the revealed religion of the Hebrews —had such a belief been established by Moses, or some

later prophet—then according to the views of the supra-naturalist, they might—nay, they must—be admitted to be correct. But it is in the Maccabæan Daniel and in the apocryphal Tobit that this doctrine of angels, in its more precise form, first appears; and it is evidently a product of the influence of the Zend religion of the Persians on the Jewish mind. We have the testimony of the Jews themselves that they brought the names of the angels with them from Babylon" ("Life of Jesus," vol. i., p. 101).

Dr. Kalisch, after having remarked that "the notions [of the Jews] concerning angels fluctuated and changed," says that "at an early period, the belief in spirits was introduced into Palestine from eastern Asia through the ordinary channels of political and commercial interchange," and that to the Hebrew "notions heathen mythology offers striking analogies;" "it would be unwarranted," the learned doctor goes on, "to distinguish between the 'established belief of the Hebrews' and 'popular superstition;' we have no means of fixing the boundary line between both; we must consider the one to coincide with the other, or we should be obliged to renounce all historical inquiry. The belief in spirits and demons was not a concession made by educated men to the prejudices of the masses, but a concession which all—the educated as well as the uneducated—made to Pagan Polytheism" ("Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament." Leviticus, part ii., pp. 284—287. Ed. 1872). "When the Jews, ever open to foreign influence in matters of faith, lived under Persian rule, they imbibed, among many other religious views of their masters, especially their doctrines of angels and spirits, which, in the region of the Euphrates and Tigris, were most luxuriantly developed." Some of the angels are now "distinguished by names, which the Jews themselves admit to have borrowed from their heathen rulers;" "their chief is Mithron, or Metatron, corresponding to the Persian Mithra, the mediator between eternal light and eternal darkness; he is the embodiment of divine omnipotence and omnipresence, the guardian of the world, the instructor of Moses, and the preserver of the law, but also a terrible avenger of disobedience and wickedness, especially in his capacity of Supreme Judge of the dead" (Ibid, pp. 287, 288). This is "the angel of the Lord" who went before the children of Israel, of whom God said "my name is in him" (see Ex. xxiii. 20—23), and who is identified by many Christian

commentators as the second person in the Trinity. The belief in devils is the other side of the belief in angels, and "we see, above all, Satan rise to greater and more perilous eminence both with regard to his power and the diversity of his functions." "This remarkable advance in demonology cannot be surprising, if we consider that the Persian system known as that of Zoroaster, and centering in the dualism of a good and evil principle, flourished most and attained its fullest development, just about the time of the Babylonian exile (Ibid, pp. 292, 293). The Persian creed supplies us, as Dr. Kalisch has well said, with "the sources from which the demonology of the Talmud, the Fathers and the Catholic Church has been derived" (Ibid, p 318).

The whole ideas of the *judgment of the dead*, the *destruction of the world by fire*, and the *punishment of the wicked*, are also purely Pagan. Justin Martyr says truly that as Minos and Rhadamanthus would punish the wicked, "we say that the same thing will be done, but by the hand of Christ" ("Apology" 1, chap. viii). "While we say that there will be a burning up of all, we shall seem to utter the doctrine of the Stoics; and while we affirm that the souls of the wicked, being endowed with sensation even after death, are punished, and that those of the good being delivered from punishment spend a blessed existence, we shall seem to say the same things as the poets and philosophers" (Ibid, chap. xx). In the Egyptian creed Osiris is generally the Judge of the dead, though sometimes Horus is represented in that character; the dead man is accused before the Judge by Typhon, the evil one, as Satan is the "accuser of the brethren;" forty-two assessors declare the innocence of the accused of the crimes they severally note; the recording angel writes down the judgment; the soul is interceded for by the lesser gods, who offer themselves as an atoning sacrifice" (see Sharpe's "Egyptian Mythology," pp. 49—52). A pit, or lake of fire, is the doom of the condemned. The good pass to Paradise, where is the tree of life: the fruit of this tree confers health and immortality. In the Persian mythology the tree of life is planted by the stream that flows from the throne of Ormuzd (Rev. xxii. 1 and 2). The Hindu creed has the same story, and it is also found among the Chinese.

The monastic life comes to us from India and from Egypt; in both countries solitaries and communities are found. Bartholémy St. Hilaire, in his book on Buddha,

gives an account of the Buddhist monasteries which is worthy perusal. From Egypt the contagion of asceticism spread over Christendom. "From Philo also we learn that a large body of Egyptian Jews had embraced the monastic rules and the life of self-denial, which we have already noted among the Egyptian priests. They bore the name of Therapeuts. They spent their time in solitary meditation and prayer, and only saw one another on the seventh day. They did not marry; the women lived the same solitary and religious life as the men. Fasting and mortification of the flesh were the foundation of their virtues" ("Egyptian Mythology," S. Sharpe, p. 79). In these Egyptian deserts grew up those wild and bigoted fanatics—some Jews, some Pagans, and apparently no difference between them—who, appearing later under the name of Christians, formed the original of the Western monasticism. It was these monks who tore Hypatia to pieces in the great church of Alexandria, and who formed the strength of "that savage and illiterate party, who looked upon all sorts of erudition, particularly that of a philosophical kind, as pernicious, and even destructive to true piety and religion" (Mosheim's "Eccles. Hist.," p. 93). There can be no doubt of the identity of the Christians and the Therapeuts, and this identity is the real key to the spread of "Christianity" in Egypt and the surrounding countries. Eusebius tells us that Mark was said to be the first who preached the Gospel in Egypt, and "so great a multitude of believers, both of men and women, were collected there at the very outset, that in consequence of their extreme philosophical discipline and austerity, Philo has considered their pursuits, their assemblies, and entertainments, as deserving a place in his descriptions" ("Eccles. Hist.," bk. ii., chap. xvi). We will see what Philo found in Egypt, before remarking on the date at which he lived. Eusebius states (we condense bk. ii., chap. xvii) that Philo "comprehends the regulations that are still observed in our churches even to the present time;" that he "describes, with the greatest accuracy, the lives of our ascetics;" these Therapeuts, stated by Eusebius to be Christians, were "everywhere scattered over the world," but they abound "in Egypt, in each of its districts, and particularly about Alexandria." In every house one room was set aside for worship, reading, and meditation, and here they kept the "inspired declarations of the prophets, and hymns," they had also "commentaries of ancient men,"

who were "the founders of the sect;" "it is highly probable that the ancient commentaries which he says they have, are the very Gospels and writings of the apostles;" Eusebius thinks that none can "be so hardy as to contradict his statement that these Therapeuts were Christians, when their practices "are to be found among none but in the religion of Christians;" and "why should we add to these their meetings, and the separate abodes of the men and the women in these meetings, and the exercises performed by them, which are still in vogue among us at the present day, and which, especially at the festival of our Saviour's passion, we are accustomed to pass in fasting and watching, and in the study of the divine word? All these the above-mentioned author has accurately described and stated in his writings, and are the same customs that are observed by us alone, at the present day, particularly the vigils of the great festival, and the exercises in them, and the hymns that are commonly recited among us.....Besides this, he describes the grades of dignity among those who administer the ecclesiastical services committed to them, those of the deacons, and the presidencies of the episcopate as the highest." Thus Philo wrote of "the original practices handed down from the apostles." The important points to notice here are: that in the time of Philo, these Christians were scattered all over the world; that the commentaries they had, which Eusebius says were the Christian's gospels, were the works of *ancient* men, who founded the sect, so that the founders were men who lived long before Philo's time; that they were thoroughly organised, proving thereby that their sect was not a new one in his day; that the "discipline," organised association, ranks of priests, etc., implied a long existence of the sect before Philo studied it, and that such existence was clearly not consistent with any persecution being then directed against it. Philo writes of flourishing and orderly communities, founded by men who had long since passed away, and had bequeathed their writings to their followers for their instruction and guidance. And what was the date of Philo? He himself gives us a clear note of time; in A.D. 40 he was sent on an embassy to the Emperor Caligula at Rome, to complain of a persecution to which the Jews were being subjected by Flaccus; he describes himself as being, in A.D. 40, "a grey-headed old man." The Rev. J. W. Lake puts him at sixty-five or seventy years of age at that period,

and consequently would place his birth twenty-five or thirty years before the birth of Jesus" ("Plato, Philo, and Paul," by Rev. J. W. Lake, pp. 33, 34). Gibbon, in a note to chap. 15, vol. ii. (p. 180), says that "by proving it (the treatise on the Therapeuts) was composed as early as the time of Augustus, Basnage has demonstrated, in spite of Eusebius, and a crowd of modern Catholics, that the Therapeuts were neither Christians nor monks." Or rather, he has proved that Christians existed before the time of Christ, since Augustus died A.D. 14, and before that date Philo found a long-established sect holding Christian doctrines and practising "apostolic" customs. A man, who in A.D. 40 was grey-headed, spoke of the Christian Gospels as writings of ancient men, founders of a well-organised sect. Now we see why Christianity has so much in common with the Egyptian mythology. Because it grew out of Egypt; its Gospels came from thence; its ceremonies were learned there; its virgin is Isis; its Christ Osiris and Horus; the mask of the revelation of God drops from off it, and we see the true face, the ancient Egyptian religion, with a feature here and there moulded by the cognate ideas of other Eastern creeds, all of which flowed into Alexandria, and mingled in its seething cauldron of thought.

There is also a Jewish sect which we must not overlook, in dealing with the sources of Christianity, that, namely, known as the Essenes. Gibbon regards the Therapeuts and the Essenes as interchangeable terms, but more careful investigation does not bear out this conclusion, although the two sects strongly resemble each other, and have many doctrines in common; he says, however, truly: "The austere life of the Essenians, their fasts and excommunications, the community of goods, the love of celibacy, their zeal for martyrdom, and the warmth, though not the purity of their faith, already offered a lively image of the primitive discipline" ("Decline and Fall," vol. ii., ch. xv., p. 180). It is to Josephus that we must turn for an account of the Essenes; a brief sketch of them is given in "Antiquities of the Jews, bk. xviii., chap. i. He says: "The doctrine of the Essenes is this: That all things are best ascribed to God. They teach the immortality of souls, and esteem that the rewards of righteousness are to be earnestly striven for; and when they send what they have dedicated to God into the temple, they do not offer sacrifices, because they have more pure lustrations of their own; on which account they

are excluded from the common court of the temple, but offer their sacrifices themselves; yet is their course of life better than that of other men; and they entirely addict themselves to husbandry." They had all things in common, did not marry and kept no servants, thus none called any master (Matt. xxiii. 8, 10). In the "Wars of the Jews," bk. ii., chap. viii., Josephus gives us a fuller account. "There are three philosophical sects among the Jews. The followers of the first of whom are the Pharisees; of the second the Sadducees; and the third sect who pretends to a severer discipline are called Essenes. These last are Jews by birth, and seem to have a greater affection for one another than the other sects [John xiii. 35]. These Essenes reject pleasures as an evil [Matt. xvi. 24], but esteem continence and the conquest over our passions to be virtue. They neglect wedlock.....They do not absolutely deny the fitness of marriage [Matt. xix. 12, last clause of verse. 1 Cor. vii. 27, 28, 32—35, 37, 38, 40] .....These men are despisers of riches [Matt. xix. 21, 23, 24].....it is a law among them, that those who come to them must let what they have be common to the whole order [Acts iv. 32—37, v. 1—11].....They also have stewards appointed to take care of their common affairs [Acts vi. 1—6].....If any of their sect come from other places, what they have lies open for them, just as if it were their own [Matt. x. 11].....For which reason they carry nothing with them when they travel into remote parts [Matt. x. 9, 10].....As for their piety towards God, it is very extraordinary; for before sunrising they speak not a word about profane matters, but put up certain prayers which they have received from their forefathers, as if they made a supplication for its rising [the Essenes were then sun-worshippers] .....A priest says grace before meat; and it is unlawful for anyone to taste of the food before grace be said. The same priest, when he hath dined, says grace again after meat; and when they begin, and when they end, they praise God, as he that bestows their food upon them [Eph. v. 18—20. 1 Cor. x. 30, 31. 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5].....They dispense their anger after a just manner, and restrain their passion [Eph. iv. 26].....Whatsoever they say also is firmer than an oath; but swearing is avoided by them, and they esteem it worse than perjury; for they say, that he who cannot be believed without swearing by God, is already condemned [Matt. v. 34—37]." We insert these references into the account given by Josephus of the Essenes, in

order to show the identity of teaching of the Gospels and the Essenes. The Essenes excommunicated those who sinned grievously; each promised, on entrance to the society, to exercise piety, observe justice, do no harm to any, show fidelity to all, and especially to those in authority, love truth, reprove lying, keep his hands clear from theft, and his soul from unlawful gains. The resemblance between the Essenes and the early Christians is on many points so strong that it is impossible to deny that the two are connected; if Jesus of Nazareth had any historical existence, he must have been one of the sect of the Essenes, who publicly preached many of their doctrines, and endeavoured to popularise them. We are thus led to conclude that the Jewish side of Christianity is simply Essenian, but that the major part of the religion is purely Pagan, and that its rise under the name of Christianity must be sought for in Alexandria rather than in Judæa.

The saints who play so great a part in the history of Christianity are, solely and simply, the old Pagan deities under new names. The ancient creeds were intertwined with the daily life of the people, and passed on, practically unchanged, although altered in name. "Ancient errors, in spite of the progress of knowledge, were respected. Civilisation, as it grew, only refined them, embellished them, or hid them under an allegorical veil" (Histoire Abrégée de Differens Cultes," Dulaure, t. i., p. 20]. "A remarkable passage in the life of Gregory, surnamed Thaumaturgus, *i.e.*, the wonder-worker, will illustrate this point in the clearest manner. This passage is as follows [here it is given in Latin]: 'When Gregory perceived that the ignorant multitude persisted in their idolatry, on account of the pleasures and sensual gratifications which they enjoyed at the Pagan festivals, he granted them a permission to indulge themselves in the like pleasures, in celebrating the memory of the holy martyrs, hoping that, in process of time they would return, of their own accord, to a more virtuous and regular course of life.' There is no sort of doubt that, by this permission, Gregory allowed the Christians to dance, sport, and feast at the tombs of the martyrs upon their respective festivals, and to do everything which the Pagans were accustomed to do in their temples, during the feasts celebrated in honour of their gods" (Mosheim's "Eccles. Hist.," 2nd century; note, p. 56). "The virtues that had formerly been ascribed to

the heathen temples, to their lustrations, to the statues of their gods and heroes, were now attributed to Christian churches, to water consecrated by certain forms of prayer, and to the images of holy men. And the same privileges that the former enjoyed under the darkness of Paganism, were conferred upon the latter under the light of the Gospel, or, rather, under that cloud of superstition that was obscuring its glory. It is true that, as yet, images were not very common [of this there is no proof]; nor were there any statues at all [equally unproven]. But it is, at the same time, as undoubtedly certain, as it is extravagant and monstrous, that the worship of the martyrs was modelled, by degrees, according to the religious services that were paid to the gods before the coming of Christ" (Ibid, 4th century; p. 98). The fact is, that wherever there was a popular god, he passed into the pantheon of Christendom under a new name, as "Christianity" spread. Dulaure, in his work above-quoted, gives a mass of details—mostly very unsavoury—which leave no doubt upon this point. The essence of the old worship was the worship of Nature, as we have seen, and a favourite deity was Priapus; this god was worshipped under the names of St. Fontin, St. Guerlichon, or Greluchon, St. Remi, St. Gilles, St. Arnaud, SS. Cosmo and Damian, etc., in the various provinces of France, Italy, and other Roman Catholic lands; and his worship, with its distinctive rites of the most indecent character, remained in practice up to, at least, 1740 in France, and 1780 in Italy. (See throughout the above work.) If Christians knew a little more about their creed they would be far less proud of it, and far less devout, than they are at present.

Mr. Glennie, in a pamphlet reprinted from "In the Morning Land," points out the resemblance between Christianity and "Osirianism," as he names the religion of Osiris: "'The peculiar character of Osiris,' says Sir Gardner Wilkinson, 'his coming upon earth for the benefit of mankind, with the titles of "Manifester of Good" and "Revealer of Truth;" his being put to death by the malice of the Evil One; his burial and resurrection, and his becoming the judge of the dead, are the most interesting features of the Egyptian religion. This was the great mystery; and this myth and his worship were of the earliest times, and universal in Egypt.' And, with this central doctrine of Osirianism, so perfectly similar to that of Christianism,

doctrines are associated precisely analogous to those associated in Christianism with its central doctrine. In ancient Osirianism, as in modern Christianism, the Godhead is conceived as a Trinity, yet are the three Gods declared to be only one God. In ancient Osirianism, as in modern Christianism, we find the worship of a divine mother and child. In ancient Osirianism, as in modern Christianism, there is a doctrine of atonement. In ancient Osirianism, as in modern Christianism, we find the vision of a last judgment, and resurrection of the body. And finally, in ancient Osirianism, as in modern Christianism, the sanctions of morality are a lake of fire and tormenting demons on the one hand, and on the other, eternal life in the presence of God. Is it possible, then, that such similarities of doctrines should not raise the most serious questions as to the relation of the beliefs about Christ to those about Osiris; as to the cause of this wonderful similarity of the doctrines of Christianism to those of Osirianism; nay, as to the possibility of the whole doctrinal system of modern orthodoxy being but a transformation of the Osiris-myth?" ("Christ and Osiris," pp. 13, 14).

Thus we find that the cardinal doctrines and the ceremonies of Christianity are of purely Pagan origin, and that "Christianity" was in existence long ages before Christ. Christianity is only, as we have said, a patchwork composed of old materials; from the later Jews comes the Unity of God; from India and Egypt the Trinity in Unity; from India and Egypt the crucified Redeemer; from India, Egypt, Greece, and Rome, the virgin mother and the divine son; from Egypt its priests and its ritual; from the Essenes and the Therapeuts its ascetism; from Persia, India, and Egypt, its Sacraments; from Persia and Babylonia its angels and its devils; from Alexandria the blending into one of many lines of thought. There is nothing original in this creed, save its special appeal to the ignorant and to babes; "not many wise men after the flesh" are found among its adherents; it is an appeal to the darkness of the world, not to its light: to superstition, not to knowledge; to faith, not to reason. As its root is, so also are its fruits, and when—after glancing at its morality—we turn to its history, we shall see that the corrupt tree bears corrupt fruit, and that from the evil stem of a thinly disguised Paganism spring forth the death-bringing branches of the Upas-tree Christianity, stunting the growth of the young civilisation

of the West, and drugging, with its poisonous dew-droppings, the Europe which lay beneath its shade, swoon-slumbering in the death stupor of the Ages of Darkness and of Faith.

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SECTION III.

ITS MORALITY FALLIBLE.

How much may fairly be included under the title "Christian Morality"? Some of the more enlightened Christians would confine the term to the morality of the New Testament, and would exclude the Hebrew code as being the outcome of a barbarous age. But the Freethinker may fairly contend that any moral rules taught by the Bible are part of Christian morality. By the statute 9 and 10 William III., cap. 32, the "Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament" are declared to be "of divine authority," and there is no exclusion indicated of the Mosaic code; this statute is binding on all British subjects educated as Christians, and enacts penalties against those who infringe it. By Article VI. of the Church of England, Holy Scripture is defined as "those canonical books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church," and a list is subjoined. In Article VII. we are instructed that the "Commandments which are called moral" are to be obeyed, but that the "civil precepts" of the Mosaic code ought not "of necessity to be received in any commonwealth;" from which we may conclude that the Church does not feel bound to enforce, as "of necessity," polygamy, prostitution, murder of heretics, and slavery. She does not venture to designate such precepts as immoral, but she does not feel bound in conscience to enforce them, for which small concession we must feel grateful. Passing from the law of the land to the Bible itself, we find that the Mosaic code must certainly be recognised as divine. Jesus himself proclaims: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets, I am not come to destroy but to fulfil," and this is emphasised by the declaration: "Whosoever, therefore,

shall break *one of these least* commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven." The Broad Church party will be very little, if this be true. Turning to the Old Testament, we find that some of the most immoral precepts are spoken by God himself, immediately after the "Ten Commandments;" surely that which "The Lord said" out of "the thick darkness where God was," from the top of Sinai "on a smoke, with the thunderings and lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet," can scarcely be reverently designated as "the outcome of a barbarous age"? Yet it is under these circumstances that God taught that a Hebrew servant might be bought for seven years; that a wife might be given him by his master, and that the wife and the children proceeding from the union belonged to the master; that the servant could only go free by deserting his wife and his own children and leaving them in slavery (Ex. xxi. 1—6). It was under these circumstances that God taught that a man might sell his daughter to be a "maid servant" (the translator's euphemism for concubine), and that, "if she please not her master" she may be bought back again, or if he "take him another" (translator supplying "wife" as throwing an air of respectability over the transaction) she may go free (Ibid 7—11). It was under these circumstances that God taught that if a man should beat a male or female slave to death, he should not be punished, providing the slave did not die till "a day or two" after, because the slave was only "his money" (Ibid. 20, 21). Why blame a Legree, when he only acts on the permission given by God from Mount Sinai? Dr. Colenso writes: "I shall never forget the revulsion of feeling with which a very intelligent Christian native, with whose help I was translating these words into the Zulu tongue, first heard them as words said to be uttered by the same great and gracious Being whom I was teaching him to trust in and adore. His whole soul revolted against the notion, that the great and blessed God, the merciful Father of all mankind, would speak of a servant, or maid, as mere 'money,' and allow a horrible crime to go unpunished, because the victim of the brutal usage had survived a few hours. My own heart and conscience at the time fully sympathised with his" ("The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua," p. 9, ed. 1862). It was under these circumstances that God taught that a thief, who possessed nothing of his own, should "be sold for his theft" (Ex.

xxii. 3). It was under these circumstances that God taught: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Ibid 18). To this cruel and wicked command myriads of unfortunate human beings have been sacrificed; in the course of the Middle Ages hundreds of thousands perished; in France and Germany "many districts and large towns burned two, three, and four hundred witches every year, in some the annual executions destroyed nearly one per cent. of the whole population.....The Reformation, which swept away so many superstitions, left this, the most odious of all, in full activity. The Churchmen of England, the Lutherans of Germany, the Calvinists of Geneva, Scotland, and New England rivalled the most bigoted Roman Catholics in their severities. Indeed, the Calvinists, though the most opposite of all to the Church of Rome, were in this respect perhaps the most implicit imitators of her delusions" ("The Bible; What it is," by C. Bradlaugh, p. 262). "During the seventeenth century, 40,000 persons are said to have been put to death for witchcraft in England alone. In Scotland the number was probably, in proportion to the population, much greater; for it is certain that even in the last forty years of the sixteenth century the executions were not fewer than 17,000" (Ibid, p. 263). The Puritans in New England signalised themselves by their merciless severity towards wizards and witches. France was the first country to stem the tide of cruelty. In 1680 Louis XIV. "issued a proclamation prohibiting all future prosecutions for witchcraft; and directing that even those who might profess the art should only be punished as impostors." In England "the last execution was at Huntingdon, in 1716;" in Scotland, at Darnock, in 1722. The last person burned as a witch was Maria Sanger, at Wurzburg, in Bavaria, 1749 (Ibid, p. 265). Such fruit has borne the command of God from Sinai. It was under these circumstances that God taught that any who sacrificed to any God but himself should be "utterly destroyed" (Ex. xxii. 20). The practical effect of this we shall presently see, in conjunction with other passages.

If we pass from these precepts, given with such special solemnity, to the other articles of the so-called Mosaic code, we shall find rules of an equally immoral character. Lev. xxiv. 16 commands that "he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord" shall be stoned. Lev. xxv. 44—46 directs the Hebrews to buy bondmen and bondwomen of the nations around them, "and ye shall take them as an

inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession," thus sanctioning the slave-traffic. Leviticus xxvii. 29 distinctly commands human sacrifice, forbidding the redemption of any that are "devoted of men." Clear as the words are, their meaning has been hotly contested, because of the stain they affix on the Mosaic code. "מות יומת that he die. The commentators take much trouble to soften this terrible sentence. According to Raschi, it concerns a man condemned to death, in which case he must not be redeemed for money. According to others, it is necessary that the person shall be devoted by public authority, and not by private vow; and the Talmud speaks of Jephthah as a fanatic for having thought that a human being could serve as a victim, as a burnt-offering; but there are too many facts which prove the existence and the execution of this barbarous law; see, besides, the paraphrase of Ben Ouziel: 'כל אפרשא טמול דדין קטול מיתחייב all anathema which shall be anathematised of the human race cannot be redeemed neither by money, by vows, nor by sacrifices, neither by prayers for mercy before God, since he is condemned to death'" (Lévitique, par Cahen, p. 143; ed. 1855). Thus Jephthah devoted to the Lord "whatsoever cometh out of the doors of my house to meet me," and, his daughter being the one who came, he "did with her according to his vow" (Judges xi. 30—40).

Kalisch, in his Commentary on the Old Testament, gives us an exhaustive essay on "Human Sacrifices among the Hebrews," endeavouring, as far as possible, to defend his people from the charge of offering such sacrifices to Jehovah by reducing instances of it to a minimum. He says, however: "Yet we have at least two clear and unquestionable instances of human sacrifices offered to Jehovah. The first is the immolation of Jephthah's daughter." He then analyses the account, pointing out that it was clearly a sacrifice to *Jehovah*, and that Jephthah's "intention of sacrificing his daughter was publicly known for two full months; no priest, no prophet, no elder, no magistrate interfered, or even remonstrated." Even further: "The event gave rise to a popular custom annually observed by the maidens of Israel; Jephthah's deed evidently met with universal approbation; it was regarded as praiseworthy piety; and indeed he could not have ventured to make his vow, had not human victims offered to Jehovah been deemed particularly meritorious in his time; otherwise he must have

apprehended to provoke by it the wrath of God, rather than procure his assistance. Nothing can be clearer or more decided.....The fact stands indisputable that human sacrifices offered to Jehovah were possible among the Hebrews long after the time of Moses, without meeting a check or censure from the teachers and leaders of the nation—a fact for which the sad political confusion that prevailed in the period of the Judges is insufficient to account" (Leviticus, Part I., pp. 383—385; ed. 1867). Kalisch further points out that the vow of Jephthah promises a *human* sacrifice; the Hebrew expression signifies "*whoever* comes forth" (see p. 383), and "the Hebrew words, in fact, absolutely exclude any animal whatever; they admit none but a human being, who alone can be described as going out of the house to meet somebody; for, though the restrictive usage of the East binds girls generally to the seclusion of the house, it seems to have been a common custom for Hebrew women to proceed and meet returning conquerors with music and rejoicing; and the sacrifice of one animal, an extremely poor offering after a most signal and most important success, would certainly not have been promised by a previous vow solemnly pronounced" (Ibid, pp. 385, 386). Our commentator justly adds: "From the tenour of the narrative it is manifest that the deed was no isolated case, but that human sacrifices were on emergencies of peculiar moment habitually offered to God, and expected to secure his aid. One instance like that of Jephthah not only justifies, but necessitates, the influence of a general custom. Pious men slaughtered human victims not to Moloch, nor to any other foreign deity, but to the national God Jehovah" (Ibid, p. 390). "The second recorded instance of human sacrifices killed in honour of Jehovah forms a remarkable incident in the life of David" (Ibid, p. 390). We read in 2 Sam. xxi. that God said that a famine then prevailing was on account of Saul and of his bloody house; that David desired to make an "atonement;" that seven men of Saul's family were hanged "in the hill *before the Lord*;" that then they were buried, with Saul and Jonathan, "and, *after that*, God was intreated for the land." "It particularly concerns us to observe that the whole matter was, in the first instance, referred to Jehovah; that David was plainly informed of the intention of the Gibeonites of 'hanging up' the seven persons 'before Jehovah' as an 'atonement;' that he wil-

lingly surrendered them for that atrocity; that he evidently expected from that act a cessation of the famine; and that this calamity is reported to have really disappeared in consequence of the offering" (Ibid, p. 392). Kalisch, in his anxiety to diminish as far as possible the evidence that human sacrifices were enjoined by the law, urges that the passage in Leviticus (xxvii. 29) merely implies that "everything so devoted shall be destroyed. The extirpation of the men, as a rule heathen enemies in Canaan, or Hebrew idolators, is indeed referred to a command of Jehovah, but it is not intended as a *sacrifice* to him" (Ibid, p. 409). Surely this verges on quibbling, and is not even then borne out by the context. Leviticus xxvii. deals entirely with private "singular vows," and the "devoting" *(Cherem)* of "man and beast and of the field of his possession," is not the judicial devoting to destruction of an idolatrous city or individual, but a special voluntary offering from a pious worshipper. Besides, even if such judicial duties were "the rule," what of the exceptions? There are several indications of the practice of human sacrifice to Jehovah beyond the two related by Kalisch (the command to sacrifice Isaac is in itself a consecration by God of the abomination); the curious account of Aaron's death—whose garments are taken off and put on his son, and who thereupon dies at the top of the mount, having walked up there for that purpose, clearly indicates that he did not die a natural death (Numbers xx. 23—28). Many think that "the fire from the Lord" which devoured Nadab and Abihu (Lev. x. 1—5) denotes the sacrifice "before the Lord" of the offending priests. Kalisch demurs to these latter charges, and to some other additional ones, but says: "It is, therefore, undoubted that human sacrifices were offered by the Hebrews from the earliest times up to the Babylonian period, both in honour of Jehovah and of heathen deities, not only by depraved idolators, but sometimes even by pious servants of God; they probably ceased to be presented to Jehovah not much before they ceased to be presented at all" (Leviticus, part i., p. 396). We cannot here omit to notice the command of God in Exodus xxii. 29, 30: "The first-born of thy sons shalt thou give to me. Likewise thou shalt do with thine oxen and with thy sheep," etc. As against this we read a command in chap. xiii. 13, "All the first-born of man among thy children thou shalt redeem." Here, as in many other instances, we get contra-

dictory commands, best explained by the fact that the Pentateuch is the work of many hands. Kalisch says: "It is impossible to deny that the first-born sons were frequently sacrificed, not only by idolatrous Israelites, in honour of foreign gods, as Moloch and Baal. but by pious men in honour of Jehovah; but the Pentateuch, the embodiment of the more enlightened and advanced creed of the Hebrews, distinctly commanded the redemption of the first-born" (Ibid, p. 404). Kalisch—we may point out—considers the Pentateuch in its present form as post Babylonian, and regards it as a reforming agent in the Jewish community.

In Numbers v. 12—31 we find the command to practise the brutal and superstitious custom of the ordeal, the endorsement of the whole ordeal system of the Middle Ages. Deuteronomy xiii. is entirely devoted to commands of murder, and is the indulgence given beforehand to every persecuting priest. The prophet whom God uses to prove his people, is to be put to death for being God's instrument; anyone who tries to turn people aside from God is to be stoned, and the hand of the nearest and dearest is to be "first upon him to put him to death;" any city which becomes idolatrous is to be destroyed, the inhabitants and the cattle are to be slain, and everything else is to be burnt. Deuteronomy xvii. 2—7 is to the same effect. These commands have also borne abundant fruit. Who can reckon the millions of human lives that have been spilt in obedience to them? The slaughter of the Midianites, of the people of Jericho, Ai, Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, and of many another city, marking with blood each step of the people of God, who smote "all the souls that were" in each, and "let none remain"—all these are but as the first-fruits of the great harvest of human slaughter, reaped for the glory of God. Right through the "sacred volume" runs the scarlet river, staining every page; when its record closes, the Church takes it up, and the river rolls on down the centuries; let the Inquisition tell over its victims; let Spain reckon her murdered ones, 31,912 burnt alive in that one land alone; let the Netherlands speak of their slain sons and daughters; let France and Italy swell the tale; nor let England and Scotland be forgotten, nor the blood-roll of Ireland be missed; Catholic murdering Arian; Arian slaying Catholic; Romanist burning Protestant; Protestant hanging Romanist. The names of those who obey God's command

may be changed, but they all do the same accursed work, spreading religion everywhere with fire and sword; nor does the harm confine itself to Jews and Christians only, for Mahomet, the prophet of Arabia, catches up the teaching of Moses and re-echoes it, and the Moslem follows on the inspired path, and stains it once again with human blood. A God, a Bible, a priesthood—how have they ruined the world; how fair and bright might earth have been had there been no teachers of religion!

> "How powerless were the mightiest monarch's arm,
> Vain his loud threat and impotent his frown!
> How ludicrous the priest's dogmatic roar!
> The weight of his exterminating curse
> How light! and his affected charity,
> To suit the pressure of the changing times,
> What palpable deceit! but for thy aid,
> Religion! but for thee, prolific fiend,
> Who peoplest earth with demons, hell with men,
> And heaven with slaves!
> Thou taintest all thou look'st upon....."

—("Queen Mab," by P. B. Shelley; can. 6. Collected works, p. 12, edition 1839.)

Deuteronomy xxi. 10—14 instructs the Hebrew that if, after victory, he sees a beautiful woman and desires her, he may take her, and if later, "thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will," to starvation, to misery, what matter, after God's chosen is satisfied. Deut. xxiii. 2 punishes a man for that which is no fault of his, his illegitimate birth. We have omitted many absurd precepts found in this Mosaic code, and have only chosen those which are grossly immoral, and can be defended by no kind of reasoning as to "defective," or "imperfect" morality, "suited to a nation in a low stage of civilisation."

These laws not only fall short of a perfect morality, but they are distinctly and foully immoral, and tend directly to the brutalisation of the nation which should live under them. It is true that there is much pure morality in this code, and some refined feeling here and there. These jewels are curiously out of place in their surroundings. Imagine a people so savage as to need laws permitting all the abominations referred to above, and yet so cultivated as to be capable of appreciating the beauty of: "If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him; thou shalt surely help him" (Exodus xxiii. 5). It is time that it should be publicly acknowledged that the so-called Mosaic code is

literally a mosaic of scattered fragments of legislation, of various ages, and various stages of civilisation, put together a few hundred years before Christ. At present, the whole code lies on the shoulders of Christianity, and is fairly pleaded against it by the Freethinker.

It is not necessary to speak here against the practical morality of Old Testament saints; the very names of Lot, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, etc., bring before the mind's eye a list of crimes so foul, so cowardly, so bloody, that no enumeration of them can be needed. Of them, we may fairly say with Virgil:—

"Non ragioniam di lor, ma guarda e passa."

Turning to the New Testament morality, we may attack it in various ways: we may argue that the better part of it is not new, and therefore cannot be regarded as especially inspired, or that it leaves out of account many virtues necessary to the well-being of families and states; or we may contend that much of it is harmful, and much of it impracticable.

The better part is that which is NON-ORIGINAL. All that is fair and beautiful in Christian morality had been taught in the world ages before Christ was born. Buddha, Confucius, Lao-Tsze, Mencius, Zoroaster, Manu, taught the noble human morality found in some of the teaching ascribed to Christ (throughout this Section the morality put into Christ's mouth in the New Testament will be treated as his).

Christ taught the duty of returning good for evil. Buddha said: "A man who foolishly does me wrong I will return to him the protection of my ungrudging love; the more evil comes from him, the more good shall go from me" ("Anthology," by Moncure D. Conway, page 240). In the Buddhist Dhammapada we read: "Let a man overcome anger by love; let him overcome evil by good; let him overcome the greedy by liberality, the liar by truth" (Ibid, p. 307). Again: "Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred ceases by love; this is an old rule" (Ibid, p. 131). Lao-Tsze says: "The good I would meet with goodness. The not good I would meet with goodness also. The faithful I would meet with faith. The not faithful I would meet with faith also. Virtue is faithful. Recompense injury with kindness" (Ibid, p. 365). Confucius struck a yet higher and truer note: "Some one said, 'What do you say concerning the principle that

injury should be recompensed with kindness?' The Sage replied, "With what, then, will you recompense kindness? Recompense kindness with kindness, and injury with justice'" (Ibid, p. 6). Manu places "returning good for evil" in his tenfold system of duties; in his code also we find: "By forgiveness of injuries the learned are purified" (Ibid, p. 311). The "golden rule" is as old as the generous and just heart. The Sabœan Book of the Law taught: "Let none of you treat his brother in a way which he himself would dislike" (Ibid, p. 7). "Tsze-Kung asked, 'Is there one word which may serve as a rule for one's whole life?' Confucius answered, 'Is not reciprocity such a word? What you do not wish done to yourself, do not to others. When you are labouring for others let it be with the same zeal as if it were for yourself'" (Ibid, pp. 6, 7).

If Christ taught humility, we read from Lao-Tsze: "I have three precious things which I hold fast and prize—Compassion, Economy, Humility. Being compassionate, I can therefore be brave. Being economical, I can therefore be liberal. Not daring to take precedence of the world, I can therefore become chief among the perfect ones. In the present day men give up compassion, and cultivate only courage. They give up economy and aim only at liberality. They give up the last place, and seek only the first. It is their death" (Ibid, p. 216). Lao-Tsze says again: "By undivided attention to the passion-nature and tenderness it is possible to be a little child. By putting away impurity from the hidden eye of the heart, it is possible to be without spot. There is a purity and quietude by which we may rule the whole world. To keep tenderness, I pronounce strength. .....The fact that the weak can conquer the strong and the tender the hard, is known to all the world; yet none carry it out in practice. The reason of heaven does not strive, yet conquers well; does not call, yet things come of their own accord; is slack, yet plans well" (Ibid, pp. 323, 324). Again: "The sage.....puts himself last, and yet is first; abandons himself, and yet is preserved. Is not this through having no selfishness? Hereby he preserves self-interest intact. He is not self-displaying, and therefore he shines. He is not self-approving, and therefore he is distinguished. He is not self-praising, and therefore he has merit. He is not self-exalting, and therefore he stands high; and inasmuch as he does not strive, no one in all the world strives with him. That ancient saying, 'He that humbles himself

shall be preserved entire'—oh, it is no vain utterance" (Ibid, pp. 327, 328).

Jesus is said to be pre-eminent as a moral teacher because he directed his teaching to the improvement of the heart, knowing that from a good heart a good life would flow; in Manu's code we read: "Action, either mental, verbal, or corporeal, bears good or evil fruit as itself is good or evil.....of that threefold action be it known in the world that the heart is the instigator" (Ibid, p. 4). Buddha said: "It is the heart of love and faith accompanying good actions which spreads, as it were, a beneficent shade from the world of men to the world of angels" (Ibid, p. 234). Jesus reminded the people that the ceremonial duties of religion were small compared with "the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and truth;" Manu wrote: "To a man contaminated by sensuality, neither the Vedas, nor liberality, nor sacrifices, nor observances, nor pious austerities will procure felicity. A wise man must faithfully discharge his moral duties, even though he dares not constantly perform the ceremonies of religion. He will fall very low if he performs ceremonial acts only, and fails to discharge his moral duties" (Ibid, p. 3). Exactly parallel to a saying of Jesus is one in the Sabœan Book of the Law: "Adhere so firmly to the truth that your yea shall be yea, and your nay, nay" (Ibid, p. 7).

In urging that all great moral duties were taught by pre-Christian thinkers, we do not mean that Christ took his moral sayings from the books of these great Eastern teachers; there was no necessity that he should go so far in search of them, for in the teachings of the Rabbis of his nation he found all of which he stood in need. Many of these teachings have been preserved in the more modern Talmud, grains of wheat amid much chaff, the moral thoughts of some of the purest Jewish minds. "Take the Talmud and study it, and then judge from what uninspired source Jesus drew much of his highest teaching. 'Whoso looketh on the wife of another with a lustful eye, is considered as if he had committed adultery' —(Kalah). 'With what measure we mete, we shall be measured again'—(Johanan). 'What thou wouldst not like to be done to thyself, do not to others; this is the fundamental law'—(Hillel). 'If he be admonished to take the splinter out of his eye, he would answer, Take the beam out of thine own'—(Tarphon). 'Imitate God in his good-

ness. Be towards thy fellow-creatures as he is towards the whole creation. Clothe the naked; heal the sick; comfort the afflicted; be a brother to the children of thy Father." The whole parable of the houses built on the rock and on the sand is taken out of the Talmud, and such instances of quotation might be indefinitely multiplied" ("On Inspiration;" by Annie Besant; Scott Series, p. 20). From these founts Jesus drew his morality, and spoke as Jew to Jews, out of the Jewish teachings. To point out these facts is by no means to disparage the nobler part of Christian morality. It is rather to elevate Humanity by showing that pure thoughts and gracious words are human, not divine; that the so-called "inspiration" is in all races cultivated to a certain point, and not in one alone; that morality is a fair blossom of earth, not a heaven-transplanted exotic, and grows naturally out of the rich soil of the loving human heart and the noble human brain.

What nobler or grander moral teachings can be found anywhere than breathe through the following passages, taken from the "bibles of all nations" so ably collected for us by Mr. Conway in the "Sacred Anthology" quoted from above? "Let a man continually take pleasure in truth, in justice, in laudable practices and in purity; let him keep in subjection his speech, his arm, and his appetites. Wealth and pleasures repugnant to law, let him shun; and even lawful acts which may cause pain, or be offensive to mankind. Let him not have nimble hands, restless feet, or voluble eyes; let him not be flippant in his speech, nor intelligent in doing mischief. Let him walk in the path of good men" (Manu, p. 7). "He who neglecteth the duties of this life is unfit for this, much less for any higher world" ("Bhagavat Gita," p. 26). "Charity is the free gift of anything not injurious. If no benefit is intended, or the gift is harmful, it is not charity. There must also be the desire to assist, or to show gratitude. It is not charity when gifts are given from other considerations, as when animals are fed that they may be used, or presents given by lovers to bind affection, or to slaves to stimulate labour. It is found where man, seeking to diffuse happiness among all men—those he loves, and those he loves not—digs canals and pools, makes roads, bridges, and seats, and plants trees for shade. It is found where, from compassion for the miserable and the poor, who have none to help them, a man erects resting-places for wanderers, and drinking-fountains, or pro-

vides food, raiment, medicine for the needy, not selecting one more than another. This is true charity, and bears much fruit" ("Katha Chari," pp. 219, 220). "Never will I seek, nor receive, private individual salvation—never enter into final peace alone; but for ever, and everywhere, will I live and strive for the universal redemption of every creature throughout the world" (Kwan-yin, p. 233). "All men have in themselves the feelings of mercy and pity, of shame and hatred of vice. It is for each one by culture to let these feelings grow, or to let them wither. They are part of the organisation of men, as much as the limbs or senses, and may be trained as well. The mountain Nicon-chau naturally brings forth beautiful trees. Even when the trunks are cut down, young shoots will constantly rise up. If cattle are allowed to feed there, the mountain looks bare. Shall we say, then, that bareness is natural to the mountain? So the lower passions are let loose to eat down the nobler growths of reverence and love in the heart of man; shall we, therefore, say that there are no such feelings in his heart at all? Under the quiet peaceful airs of morning and evening the shoots tend to grow again. Humanity is the heart of man; justice is the path of man. To know heaven is to develop the principle of our higher nature" (Mencius, pp. 275, 276). "The first requisite in the pursuit of virtue is, that the learner think of his own improvement, and do not act from a regard to (the admiration of) others" ("The She-King," p. 286). "Benevolence, justice, fidelity, and truth, and to delight in virtue without weariness, constitute divine nobility" (Mencius, p. 339). "Virtue is a service man owes himself; and though there were no heaven, nor any God to rule the world, it were not less the binding law of life. It is man's privilege to know the right and follow it. Betray and prosecute me, brother men! Pour out your rage on me, O malignant devils! Smile, or watch my agony with cold disdain, ye blissful gods! Earth, hell, heaven, combine your might to crush me—I will still hold fast by this inheritance! My strength is nothing—time can shake and cripple it; my youth is transient—already grief has withered up my days; my heart—alas! it seems well nigh broken now! Anguish may crush it utterly, and life may fail; but even so my soul, that has not tripped, shall triumph, and dying, give the lie to soulless destiny, that dares to boast itself man's master" ("Ramayana," pp. 340, 341). What Christian apostle left

behind him the records of such words as those of Confucius, boldly spoken to a king: "Ke K'ang, distressed about the number of thieves in his kingdom, inquired of Confucius how he might do away with them? The sage said, 'If you, sir, were not covetous, the people would not steal, though you should pay them for it.' Ke K'ang asked, 'What do you say about killing the unprincipled for the good of the principled?' Confucius said, 'In carrying out your government, why use killing at all? Let the rulers desire what is good, and the people will be good. The grass must bend when the wind blows across it.' How can men who cannot rectify themselves, rectify others?" ("Analects of Confucius," p. 358).

In "The Wheel of the Law," by Henry Alabaster, we find some most interesting information on the moral teaching of Buddhism, and the following quotation is taken from one of the Sutras: "On a certain occasion the Lord Buddha led a number of his disciples to a village of the Kalamachou, where his wisdom and merit and holiness were known. And the Kalamachou assembled, and did homage to him and said, 'Many priests and Brahmins have at different times visited us, and explained their religious tenets, declaring them to be excellent, but each abused the tenets of every one else, whereupon we are in doubt as to whose religion is right and whose wrong; but we have heard that the Lord Buddha teaches an excellent religion, and we beg that we may be freed from doubt, and learn the truth.' And the Lord Buddha answered, 'You were right to doubt, for it was a doubtful matter. I say unto all of you, Do not believe in what ye have heard; that is, when you have heard anyone say this is especially good or extremely bad; do not reason with yourselves that if it had not been true, it would not have been asserted, and so believe in its truth. Neither have faith in traditions, because they have been handed down for many generations and in many places. Do not believe in anything because it is rumoured and spoken of by many; do not think that it is a proof of its truth. Do not believe merely because the written statement of some old sage is produced; do not be sure that the writing has ever been revised by the said sage, or can be relied on. Do not believe in what you have fancied, thinking that because an idea is extraordinary it must have been implanted by a Dewa, or some wonderful being. Do not believe in guesses, that is, assuming some-

thing at haphazard as a starting-point, draw your conclusions from it; reckoning your two and your three and your four before you have fixed your number one. Do not believe because you think there is analogy, that is, a suitability in things and occurrences, such as believing that there must be walls of the world, because you see water in a basin, or that Mount Meru must exist because you have seen the reflection of trees: or that there must be a creating God because houses and towns have builders.....Do not believe merely on the authority of your teachers and masters, or believe and practise merely because they believe and practise. I tell you all, you must of your own selves know that "this is evil this is punishable, this is censured by wise men, belief in this will bring no advantage to one, but will cause sorrow." And when you know this, then eschew it. I say to all you dwellers in this village, answer me this. Lopho, that is covetousness, Thoso, that is anger and savageness, and Moho, that is ignorance and folly—when any or all of these arise in the hearts of men, is the result beneficial or the reverse?' And they answered, 'It is not beneficial, O Lord!' Then the Lord continued, 'Covetous, passionate, and ignorant men destroy life and steal, and commit adultery, and tell lies, and incite others to follow their example, is it not so?' And they answered, 'It is as the Lord says.' And he continued, 'Covetousness, passion, ignorance, the destruction of life, theft, adultery, and lying, are these good or bad, right or wrong? Do wise men praise or blame them? Are they not unprofitable, and causes of sorrow?' And they replied, 'It is as the Lord has spoken.' And the Lord said, 'For this I said to you, do not believe merely because you have heard, but when of your own consciousness you know a thing to be evil, abstain from it.' And then the Lord taught of that which is good, saying, 'If any of you know of yourselves that anything is good and not evil, praised by wise men, advantageous, and productive of happiness, then act abundantly according to your belief. Now I ask you, Alopho, absence of covetousness, Athoso, absence of passion, Amoho, absence of folly, are these profitable or not?' And they answered, 'Profitable.' The Lord continued, 'Men who are not covetous, or passionate, or foolish, will not destroy life, nor steal, nor commit adultery, nor tell lies; is it not so?' And they answered, 'It is as the Lord says.' Then the Lord asked, 'Is freedom from covetousness, passion, and folly, from des-

truction of life, theft, adultery, and lying, good or bad, right or wrong, praised or blamed by wise men, profitable, and tending to happiness or not?' And they replied, 'It is good, right, praised by the wise, profitable, and tending to happiness. And the Lord said, 'For this I taught you, not to believe merely because you have heard, but when you believed of your own consciousness, then to act accordingly and abundantly'" (pp. 35—38). In this wise fashion did Buddha found his morality, basing it on utility, the true measure of right and wrong. Buddhism has its Five Commandments, certainly equal in value to the Ten Commandments of Jews and Christians :—

"First. Thou shalt abstain from destroying or causing the destruction of any living thing.

Second. Thou shalt abstain from acquiring or keeping, by fraud or violence, the property of another.

Third. Thou shalt abstain from those who are not proper objects for thy lust.

Fourth. Thou shalt abstain from deceiving others either by word or deed.

Fifth. Thou shalt abstain from intoxication" (Ibid, p. 57).

From Dr. Muir's translations of "religious and moral sentiments," already quoted from, we might fill page after page with purest morality. "Let a man be virtuous even while yet a youth ; for life is transitory. If duty is performed, a good name will be obtained, as well as happiness, here and after death" ("Mahabharata," xii., 6538, p. 22). "Deluded by avarice, anger, fear, a man does not understand himself. He plumes himself upon his high birth, contemning those who are not well-born ; and overcome by the pride of wealth, he reviles the poor. He calls others fools, and does not look to himself. He blames the faults of others, but does not govern himself. When the wise and the foolish, the rich and the poor, the noble and the ignoble, the proud and the humble, have departed to the cemetery and all sleep there, their troubles are at an end, and their bodies are stripped of flesh, little else than bones, united by tendons —other men then perceive no difference between them, whereby they could recognise a distinction of birth or of form. Seeing that all sleep, deposited together in the earth, why do men foolishly seek to treat each other injuriously? He who, after bearing this admonition, acts in conformity therewith from his birth onwards, shall attain the highest blessedness" (Ibid, xi. 116, p. 23).

Such are a few of the moral teachings current in the East before the time of Christ. Since that period, these non-Christian nations have gone on in their paths, and many a gem of pure morality might be culled from their later writings, but we have only here presented teachings that were pre-Christian, so as to prove how little need there was for a God to become incarnate to teach morality to the world. "Revealed morality" has nothing grander to say than this earth-born morality, nothing sublimer comes from Judæa than comes from Hindustan and from China. Just as the symbolism of Christianity comes from nature, and is common to many creeds, so does the morality of Christianity flow from nature, and is common to many faiths; when nations attain to a certain stage of civilisation, and inherit a certain amount of culture, they also develop a morality proportionate to the point they have reached, because morality is necessary to the stability of States, and utility formulates the code of moral laws. Christianity can no longer stand on a pinnacle as the sole possessor of a pure and high morality. The pedestal she has occupied is built out of the bricks of ignorance, and her apostles and her master must take rank among their brethren of every age and clime.

It is a serious fault in Christian morality that it has so many OMISSIONS in it. It is full of exhortations to bear, to suffer, to be patient; it sorely lacks appeals to patriotism, to courage, to self-respect. "The heroes of Paganism exemplified the heroism of enterprise. Patriotism, chivalrous deeds of valour, high-souled aspirations after glory, stern justice taking its course in their hands, while natural feeling was held in abeyance—this was the line in which they shone. Our blessed Lord illustrated all virtues indeed, but most especially the passive ones. His heroism took its colouring from endurance. Women, though inferior to men in enterprise, usually come out better than men in suffering; and it is always to be remembered that our blessed Lord held his humanity, not of the stronger, but of the weaker sex" ("Thoughts on Personal Religion," by Dean Goulburn, vol. ii., p. 99; ed. 1866). What is this but to say, in polite language, that Jesus was very effeminate? The Christian religion has all the vices of slavery, and encourages submission to evil instead of resistance to it; it has in it the pathetic beauty of the meekness of the bruised and beaten wife still loving the injurer, of the slave forgiving the

slave-driver, but it is a beauty which perpetuates the wrong of which it is born. Better, far better, both for oppressor and for oppressed, is resistance to cruelty than submission to it; submission encourages the wrong-doer where resistance would check him, and Christianity fails in that it omits to value strong men and true patriots, rebels against authority which is unjust. Rome taught its citizens to reverence themselves, to love their country, to maintain freedom: the Roman would die gladly for his mother-country, and deemed his duty as a citizen the foremost of his obligations. The love of country, and the sense of service owed to the State, is the grandest and sublimest virtue of the Pagan world. All felt it, from the highest to the lowest: at Thermopylæ the Spartans died gladly for the land they covered with their bodies, faithful unto death to the duty entrusted to them by their country; men and women equally felt the paramount claim of the State, and mothers gave their sons to death rather than that they should fail in duty there. The Roman was taught to value the Republic above its officers; to resist the highest if he grasped at unfair supremacy; to maintain inviolate the rights and the liberties of the people. Christianity undermined all these manly virtues; it preached obedience to "the powers that be," whether they were good or bad; it upheld the authority of a Nero as "ordained of God," and pronounced damnation on those who resisted him; and so it paved the way for the despotism of the Middle Ages, by crushing out the manhood of the nations, and fashioning them into Oriental slaves. Little wonder that kings embraced Christianity, and forced it on their subjects, for it placed the nations bound at their footstools, and endorsed the tyranny of man with the authority of God. Throughout the New Testament what word is there of patriotism? The citizenship is in heaven. What incitement to heroism? Resist not the power. What appeal to self-reverence? In my flesh dwelleth no good thing. What cry against injustice and oppression? Honour the king, and give obedience to the froward. Christianity makes a paradise for tyrants and a hell for the oppressed.

Intertwined with the evil of omissions of duty is the direct injury of commanding NON-RESISTANCE, and of enforcing INDIFFERENCE TO EARTHLY CARES. "I say unto you that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat,

let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away" (Matt. v. 39—42). The surface meaning of these words is undeniable; they are the amplification of the command, "resist not evil." What effect would obedience to these injunctions have upon a State? None committing an assault would be punished; every unjust suit would succeed; every forced concession would be endorsed; every beggar would live in luxury; every borrower would spend at will. Nay more; those who did wrong would be rewarded, and would be thus encouraged to go on in their evil ways. Meanwhile, the man who was insulted would be again struck; the poor man who had lost one thing would lose two; the hard-working, frugal labourer would have to support the beggar and the borrower out of the fruits of his toil. Such is Christ's code of civil laws: he is deliberately abrogating the Mosaic code, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," and is replacing it by his own. If the Mosaic law is to be taken literally—as it was—that which is to replace it must also be taken literally, or else one code would be abolished, and there would be none to succeed it, so that the State would be left in a condition of lawlessness. Suppose, however, that we allow that the passage is to be taken metaphorically, what then? A metaphor must mean *something:* what does this metaphor mean? It can scarcely signify the exact opposite of what it intimates, and yet the exact opposite is true morality. Only a system of taking Christ's words "contrariwise" can make them useful as civil rules, and even "oriental exaggeration" can scarcely be credited with saying the diametrically contrary of its real meaning. But it is urged that, if all men were Christians, then this teaching would be right, and Christ was bound to give a perfect morality. That is to say, if people were different to what they are, this teaching of Christ would not be injurious because—it would be unneeded! If there were no robbers, and no assaulters, and no borrowers, then the morality of the Sermon on the Mount would be most harmless. High praise, truly, for a legislator that his laws would not be injurious when they were no longer needed. Christ should have remembered that the "law is made for sinners," and that such a law as he gives here is a direct encouragement to sin.

We can scarcely wonder that, inculcating a course of conduct which must inevitably lead to poverty, Christ should hold up a state of poverty as desirable. We read in Matthew v. 3, "Blessed are the poor *in spirit*," and it is contended that it is poverty only of spirit which Christ blesses; if so, he blesses the source of much wretchedness, for poor-spirited people get trampled down, and are a misery to themselves and a burden to those about them. If, however, we turn to Luke vi. 20, we find the declaration: "Blessed are ye poor," addressed directly to his Apostles, who were anything but poor in spirit (Luke ix. 46, and xxii. 24); and we find it, further, joined with the announcement," blessed are ye that hunger now," and followed by the curses: "Woe unto you that are rich.....woe unto you that are full." If "hunger" means "hunger after righteousness," the antithesis "full" must also mean "full of righteousness," a state on which Christ would surely not pronounce a woe. Mr. Bradlaugh well draws out the various thoughts in these most unfortunate sayings: "Is poverty of spirit the chief amongst virtues, that Jesus gives it the prime place in his teaching? Is poverty of spirit a virtue at all? Surely not. Manliness of spirit, honesty of spirit, fulness of rightful purpose, these are virtues; but poverty of spirit is a crime. When men are poor in spirit, then do the proud and haughty in spirit oppress and trample upon them, but when men are true in spirit and determined (as true men should be) to resist and prevent evil, wrong, and injustice whenever they can, then is there greater opportunity for happiness here, and no lesser fitness for the enjoyment of future happiness, in some may be heaven, hereafter. Are you poor in spirit, and are you smitten; in such case what did Jesus teach? 'Unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other' (Luke vi. 29). It were better far to teach that 'he who courts oppression shares the crime.' Rather say, if smitten once, take careful measures to prevent a future smiting. I have heard men preach passive resistance, but this teaches actual invitation of injury, a course degrading in the extreme.....the poverty of spirit principle is enforced to the fullest conceivable extent—'Him that taketh away thy cloak, forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee, and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again' (Luke vi. 29, 30). Poverty of person is the only possible sequence to this extraordinary manifestation of poverty of spirit. Poverty of

person is attended with many unpleasantnesses; and if Jesus knew that poverty of goods would result from his teaching, we might expect some notice of this. And so there is—as if he wished to keep the poor content through their lives with poverty, he says, 'Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God' (Luke vi. 20).....Poor in spirit and poor in pocket. With no courage to work for food, or money to purchase it, we might well expect to find the man who held these doctrines with empty stomach also; and what does Jesus teach? 'Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled'.....Craven in spirit, with an empty purse and hungry mouth—what next? The man who has not manliness enough to prevent wrong, will probably bemoan his hard fate, and cry bitterly that so sore are the misfortunes he endures. And what does Jesus teach? 'Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh" (Luke vi. 21).....Jesus teaches that the poor, the hungry, and the wretched shall be blessed. This is not so. The blessing only comes when they have ceased to be poor, hungry, and wretched. Contentment under poverty, hunger, and misery is high treason, not to yourself alone but to your fellows. These three, like foul diseases, spread quickly wherever humanity is stagnant and content with wrong" ("What Did Jesus Teach?" pp. 1—3).

But Jesus did more than panegyrise poverty; he gave still more exact directions to his disciples as to how poverty should be attained. Matt. vi. 25—34 is as mischievous a passage as has been penned by any moralist. "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." It is said that "take no thought" means, "be not over anxious;" if this be so, why does Christ emphasise it by quoting birds and lilies as examples, things, which, literally, take *no* thought? the argument is: birds do not store food in barns, yet God feeds them. You are more valuable than the birds. God will take equal care of you if you follow the birds' example. The lilies spin no raiment, yet God clothes them. So shall he clothe you, if you follow their example. The passage has no meaning, the illustrations no appositeness, unless Christ means that *no* thought is to be taken for the future. He makes the argument still stronger: "the Gentiles seek" meat, drink, and clothing. But God, your Father, knows your need for all these things. Therefore, "seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,

and all these things shall be added unto you. Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." If Christ only meant the common-place advice, "do not be over-anxious," he then lays the most absurd stress on it, and speaks in the most exaggerated way. Sensible Gentiles do not worry themselves by over-anxiety, after they have taken for the morrow's needs all the care they can; but they do not act like birds or like lilies, for they know that many a bird starves in a hard winter because it is not capable of gathering and storing food into barns, and that many a garbless lily is shrivelled up by the cold east wind. They notice that though men and women are "much better than" birds and lilies, yet God does not always feed and clothe them; that, on the contrary, many a poor creature dies of starvation and of winter's bitter cold; when our daily papers record no inquests on those who die from want, because none but God takes thought for them, then it will be time enough for us to cease from preparing for the morrow, and to trust that "heavenly Father" who at present "knoweth that" we "have need of these things," and, knowing, lets so many of his children starve for lack of them.

The true meaning of Christ is plainly shown by his injunctions to the twelve apostles and to the seventy when he sent them on a journey: "Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, nor money; neither have two coats apiece" (Luke ix. 3); and: "Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes.....in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give" (Ibid, x. 4, 7). The same spirit breathes in his injunction to the young man: "Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me" (Matt. xix. 21). The fact is that Jesus held the ascetic doctrine, that poverty was, in itself, meritorious; and, in common with many sects, he regarded the highest life as the life of the mendicant teacher. His doctrine of poverty passed on into the Church that bears his name, and one of the three vows taken by those who aspire to lead "the angelic life" is the vow of poverty. The mendicant friars of the Middle Ages, the "sturdy beggars," are the lineal descendants of the Eastern mendicants, and are the fruits of the morality taught by Christ. On this point, as on many others, the morality of the Epistles is far higher

than that of the Gospels, and the common-sense and righteous law, "that if any would not work neither should he eat" is, however, incompatible with Christ's admiration for mendicancy, a far more wholesome and salutary kind of moral teaching than that which we have been considering.

The dogma of rewards and punishments as taught by Christ is fatal to all reality of virtue. To do right from hope of heaven: to avoid wrong for fear of hell: such virtue is only skin-deep, and will not stand rough usage. True virtue does right because it *is* right, and therefore beneficial, and not from hope of a personal reward, or from dread of a personal punishment, hereafter. Christianity is the apotheosis of selfishness, gilded over with piety; self is the pivot on which all turns: "What shall it *profit* a man if he gain the whole world, and lose *his own* soul?" (Mark viii. 36). "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet *shall receive a prophet's reward;* and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man *shall receive a righteous man's reward.* And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he *shall in no wise lose his reward*" (Matt. x. 41, 42). "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, *him will I confess also* before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, *him will I also deny* before my Father which is in heaven" (Ibid, 32, 33). "Pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, *shall reward thee* openly" (Ibid, vi. 6). "We have forsaken all and followed thee: *what shall we have therefore?*.....When the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, *ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones*" (Matt. xix. 27, 28). The passages might be multiplied; but these are sufficient to show the thorough selfishness inculcated. All is done with an eye to personal gain in the future; even the cold water is to be given, not because the "little one" is thirsty and needs it, but for the reward promised therefore to the giver. Pure, generous love is excluded: there is a taint of selfishness in every gift.

The thought of Heaven is also injurious to human welfare, because men learn to disregard earth for the sake of "the glory to be revealed." People whose "citizenship is in heaven," make but sorry citizens of earth, for they regard this world as "no continuing city," while they "seek one to

come." Hence, as all history shows us, they are apt to despise this world while dreaming about another, to trouble little about earth's wrongs while thinking of the mansions in the skies; to acquiesce in any assertion that "the whole world lieth in wickedness," and to trouble themselves but little as to the means of improving it. From this line of thought follows the long list of monasteries and nunneries, wherein people "separate" themselves from this world in order to "prepare" for another. All this evil flows directly from the Christian morality which teaches that all hopes, efforts, and aims should be turned towards laying up treasures in heaven, where also the heart should be. One need scarcely add a word of reprobation as to the horrible doctrine of eternal torture, although that, too, is part of the teaching of Christ. The whole conscience of civilised mankind is so turning against that shameful and cruel dogma, that it is only now believed among the illiterate and uncultured of the Christians, and soon will be too savage even for them. It has, however, hardened the hearts of many in days gone by, and has made the burning of heretics seem an appropriate act of faith, since men only began on earth the roasting which God was to continue to all eternity.

The morality of Christ is also faulty because it shares in the persecuting spirit of the Mosaic code. The disciples are told: "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily, I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city" (Matt. x. 14, 15). Christ proclaims openly: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Ibid, 34—36). To a man whom he calls to follow him, and who asks to be allowed first to bury his father, Christ gives the brutal reply: "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God" (Luke x. 60). Another time he says: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Ibid, xiv. 26). A religion that destroys the home, that introduces discord into the family, that bids its votaries hate all else

save Christ, acts as a disintegrating force in human life, and cannot be too strongly opposed.

Neither must we forget the teaching of Christ regarding marriage. He deliberately places virginity above marriage, and counsels self-mutilation to those capable of making the sacrifice. "All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.....there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. *He that is able to receive it, let him receive it* (Matt. xix. 11, 12. Following this, 1 Cor. vii. teaches the superiority of an unmarried state, and threatens "trouble in the flesh" to those who marry. And in Rev. xiv. 1—4, we find, following the Lamb, with special privileges, 144,000 who "were not defiled with women; for they are virgins." This coarse and insulting way of regarding women, as though they existed merely to be the safety-valves of men's passions, and that the best men were above the temptation of loving them, has been the source of unnumbered evils. To this saying of Christ are due the self-mutilations of many, such as Origen, and the destruction of myriads of human lives in celibacy; monks and nuns innumerable owe to this evil teaching their shrivelled lives and withered hearts. For centuries the leaders of Christian thought spoke of women as of a necessary evil, and the greatest saints of the Church are those who despised women the most. The subjection of women in Western lands is wholly due to Christianity. Among the Teutons women were honoured, and held a noble and dignified place in the tribe; Christianity brought with it the evil Eastern habit of regarding women as intended for the toys and drudges of man, and intensified it with a special spite against them, as the daughters of Eve, who was first "deceived." Strangely different to the general Eastern feeling and showing a truer and nobler view of life, is the precept of Manu: "Where women are honoured, there the deities are pleased; but where they are dishonoured, there all religious acts become fruitless" ("Anthology," p. 310).

Evil also is the teaching that repentance is higher than purity: "joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenth, *more than* over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance" (Luke xv. 7, 10). The fatted calf is slain for the prodigal son, who returns home after he has wasted all his substance; and to the laborious elder son, during the many years of his service, the father never gave

even a kid that he might make merry with his friends (Ibid, 29). What is all this but putting a premium upon immorality, and instructing people that the more they sin, the more joyous will be their welcome whenever they may choose to reform, and, like the prodigal, think to mend their broken fortunes by repentance?

Thoroughly immoral is the teaching contained in the two parables in Luke xvi. In the one, a steward who has wasted his master's goods, is commended because he went and bribed his employer's debtors to assist him, by suggesting to them that they should cheat his master by altering the amount of the bills they owed him. In the other, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the evil moral is taught that riches are in themselves deserving of punishment, and poverty of reward. The rich man is in hell simply because he was rich, and the poor man in Abraham's bosom simply because he was poor; it can scarcely add, one may remark, to the pleasure of heaven for the Lazaruses all to look at the Diveses, and be unable to reach them, even to give them a single drop of water.

Thus whether we see that the nobler part of the Christian morality is pre-Christian, and is neither Christian, nor Jewish, nor Hindu, nor Buddhist, but is simply human, and belongs to the race and not to one creed. Whether we note the omissions in its code, making it insufficient for human guidance; whether we mark its errors, mistakes, and injurious teachings; whichever point of view we take from which to consider it, we find in it nothing to distinguish it above other moral codes, or to prevent it from being classed among other moralities, as being a mixture of good and bad, and, therefore, not to be taken as an unerring guide, being like them, all FALLIBLE.

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SECTION IV.

ITS HISTORY.

THIS section does not pretend, within the short limits of some fifty pages, to give even a complete summary of Christian history. It proposes only to draw up an impeachment against Christianity from the facts of its history which occurred in the day of its power, from the time of Constantine, up to the time of the Reformation. If it be urged that Christianity was corrupt during this period, and ought not therefore to be judged by it, we can only reply that, corrupt or not, it is the only Christianity there was, and if only bad fruit is brought forth, it is fair to conclude that the tree which bears nothing else is also bad. If the bishops, and clergy, and missionaries were ignorant, sensual, tyrannical, and superstitious, they are none the less the representatives of Christianity, and if these are not true Christians, *where are the true Christians* from A.D. 324 to A.D. 1,500?

We propose, in this section, to practically condense the dark side of Mosheim's "Ecclesiastical History," as translated from the Latin by Dr. A. Maclaine (ed. 1847), only adding, here and there, extracts from other writers; all extracts, therefore, except where otherwise specified, will be taken from this valuable history, a history which, perhaps from its size and dryness, is not nearly so much studied by Freethinkers as it should be; its special worth for our object is that Dr. Mosheim is a sincere Christian, and cannot, therefore, be supposed to strain any point unduly against the religion to which he himself belongs.

During the second and third centuries the Christians appear to have grown in power and influence, and their faith, made up out of many older creeds and forming a kind of eclectic religion, gradually spread throughout the Roman empire, and became a factor in political problems.

In the struggles between the opposing Roman emperors, A.D. 310—324, the weight of the Christian influence was thrown on the side of Constantine, his rivals being strongly opposed to Christianity; Maximin Galerius was a bitter persecutor, and his successor, Maximin, trod in his steps; in A.D. 312, and 313, Maxentius was defeated by Constantine, and Maximin by Licinius, and in A.D. 312 Constantine and Licinius granted liberty of worship to the Christians; in the following year, according to Mosheim, or in A.D. 314 according to Eusebius, a second edict was issued from Milan, by the two emperors, which granted "to the Christians and to all, the free choice to follow that mode of worship which they may wish.....that no freedom at all shall be refused to Christians, to follow or to keep their observances or worship; but that to each one power be granted to devote his mind to that worship which he may think adapted to himself" (Eusebius, "Eccles. Hist." p. 431). Licinius, however, renewed the war against Constantine, who immediately embraced Christianity, thus securing to himself the sympathy and assistance of the faith which now for the first time saw its votary on the imperial throne of the world, and Licinius, by allying himself with Paganism, and persecuting the Christians, drove them entirely over to Constantine, and was finally defeated and dethroned, A.D. 324. From that date Christianity was supreme, and became the established religion of the State. Dr. Draper regards the conversion of Constantine from the point of view taken above. He says: "It had now become evident that the Christians constituted a powerful party in the State, animated with indignation at the atrocities they had suffered, and determined to endure them no longer. After the abdication of Diocletian (A.D. 305), Constantine, one of the competitors for the purple, perceiving the advantages that would accrue to him from such a policy, put himself forth as the head of the Christian party. This gave him, in every part of the empire, men and women ready to encounter fire and sword in his behalf; it gave him unwavering adherents in every legion of the armies. In a decisive battle, near the Milvian bridge, victory crowned his schemes. The death of Maximin, and subsequently that of Licinius, removed all obstacles. He ascended the throne of the Cæsars—the first Christian emperor. Place, profit, power—these were in view of whoever now joined the conquering sect. Crowds of worldly persons, who cared nothing about its religious

ideas, became its warmest supporters. Pagans at heart, their influence was soon manifested in the Paganisation of Christianity that forthwith ensued. The emperor, no better than they, did nothing to check their proceedings. But he did not personally conform to the ceremonial requirements of the Church until the close of his evil life, A.D. 337" ("History of the Conflict between Religion and Science," p. 39; ed. 1875). Constantine, in fact, was not baptised until a few days before his death.

The character of the first Christian emperor is not one which strikes us with admiration. As emperor he sank into "a cruel and dissolute monarch, corrupted by his fortune, or raised by conquest above the necessity of dissimulation.....the old age of Constantine was disgraced by the opposite yet reconcilable vices of rapaciousness and prodigality" (Gibbon's "Decline and Fall," vol. ii., p. 347). He was as effeminate as he was vicious. "He is represented with false hair of various colours, laboriously arranged by the skilful artists of the time; a diadem of a new and more expensive fashion; a profusion of gems and pearls, of collars and bracelets, and a variegated flowing robe of silk, most curiously embroidered with flowers of gold." To his other vices he added most bloodthirsty cruelty. He strangled Licinius, after defeating him; murdered his own son Crispus, his nephew Licinius, and his wife Fausta, together with a number of others. It must indeed have needed an efficacious baptism to wash away his crimes; and "future tyrants were encouraged to believe that the innocent blood which they might shed in a long reign would instantly be washed away in the waters of regeneration" (Ibid, pp. 471, 472).

The wealth of the Christian churches was considerable during the third century, and the bishops and clergy lived in much pomp and luxury. "Though several [bishops] yet continued to exhibit to the world illustrious examples of primitive piety and Christian virtue, yet many were sunk in luxury and voluptuousness, puffed up with vanity, arrogance, and ambition, possessed with a spirit of contention and discord, and addicted to many other vices that cast an undeserved reproach upon the holy religion of which they were the unworthy professors and ministers. This is testified in such an ample manner by the repeated complaints of many of the most respectable writers of this age, that truth will not permit us to spread the veil which we should otherwise be desirous

to cast over such enormities among an order so sacred..... The example of the bishops was ambitiously imitated by the presbyters, who, neglecting the sacred duties of their station, abandoned themselves to the indolence and delicacy of an effeminate and luxurious life. The deacons, beholding the presbyters deserting thus their functions, boldly usurped their rights and privileges; and the effects of a corrupt ambition were spread through every rank of the sacred order" (p. 73). During this century also we find much scandal caused by the pretended celibacy of the clergy, for the people—regarding celibacy as purer than marriage, and considering that "they, who took wives, were of all others the most subject to the influence of malignant demons"—urged their clergy to remain celibate, "and many of the sacred order, especially in Africa, consented to satisfy the desires of the people, and endeavoured to do this in such a manner as not to offer an entire violence to their own inclinations. For this purpose, they formed connections with those women who had made vows of perpetual chastity; and it was an ordinary thing for an ecclesiastic to admit one of these fair saints to the participation of his bed, but still under the most solemn declarations, that nothing passed in this commerce that was contrary to the rules of chastity and virtue" (p. 73). Such was the morality of the clergy as early as the third century!

The doctrine of the Church in these primitive times was as confused as its morality was impure. In the first century (during which we really know nothing of the Christian Church), Dr. Mosheim, in dealing with "divisions and heresies," points to the false teachers mentioned in the New Testament, and the rise of the Gnostic heresy. Gnosticism (from γνοσις, knowledge), a system compounded of Christianity and Oriental philosophy, long divided the Church with the doctrines known as orthodox. The Gnostics believed in the existence of the two opposing principles of good and evil, the latter being by many considered as the creator of the world. They held that from the Supreme God emanated a number of Æons—generally put at thirty; (see throughout "Irenæus Against Heresies") —and some maintained that one of these, Christ, descended on the man Jesus at his baptism, and left him again just before his passion; others that Jesus had not a real, but only an apparent, body of flesh. The Gnostic philosophy had many forms and many interdivisions; but most of the

"heresies" of the first centuries were branches of this one tree: it rose into prominence, it is said, about the time of Adrian, and among its early leaders were Marcion, Basilides, and Valentinus. In addition to the various Gnostic theories, there was a deep mark of division between the Jewish and the Gentile Christians; the former developed into the sects of Nazarenes and Ebionites, but were naturally never very powerful in the Church. In the second century, as the Christians become more visible, their dissensions are also more clearly marked; and it is important to observe that there is no period in the history of Christianity wherein those who laid claim to the name "Christian" were agreed amongst themselves as to what Christianity was. Gnosticism we see now divided into two main branches, Asiatic and Egyptian. The Asiatic believed that, in addition to the two principles of good and evil, there was a third being, a mixture of both, the Demiurgus, the creator, whose son Jesus was; they maintained that the body of Jesus was only apparent; they enforced the severest discipline against the body, which was evil, in that it was material; and marriage, flesh, and wine were forbidden. The Elcesaites were a judaising branch of this Asiatic Gnosticism; Saturninus of Antioch, Ardo of Syria, and Marcion of Pontus headed the movement, and after them Lucan, Severus, Blastes, Apelles, and Bardesanes formed new sects. Tatian (see ante, pp. 259, 260) had many followers called Tatianists, and in connection with him and his doctrines we hear of the Eucratites, Hydroparastates (the water-drinkers), and Apotactites. The Eucratites appear to have been in existence before Tatian professed Gnosticism, but he so increased their influence as to be sometimes regarded as their founder. The Egyptian Gnostics were less ascetic, and mostly favoured the idea that Jesus had a real body on which the Æon descended and joined himself thereunto. They regarded him as born naturally of Joseph and Mary. Basilides, and Valentinus headed the Egyptians, and then we have as sub-divisions the Carpocratians, Ptolemaites, Secundians, Heracleonites, Marcosians, Adamites, Cainites, Sethites, Florinians, Ophites, Artemonites, and Hermogenists; in addition to these we have the Monarchians or Patripassians, who maintained that there was but one God, and that the Father suffered (whence this name) in the person of Christ. This long list may be closed with the Montanists, a sect joined by Tertullian

(see his account of the orthodox after he became a Montanist, ante, p. 225); they held that Montanes, their founder, was the Paraclete promised by Christ, missioned to complete the Christian code; he forbade second marriages, the reception into the Church of those who had been excommunicated for grievous sin, and inculcated the sternest asceticism. He opposed all learning as anti-Christian, a doctrine which was rapidly spreading among Christians, and which seems, indeed, to have been an integral part of the religion from its very beginning (Matt. xi. 25. 1 Cor. i. 26, 27). In the third century the heretic camp received a new light in the person of Manes, or Manichæus, a Persian magus; he appears to have been a man of great learning, a physician, an astronomer, a philosopher. He taught the old Persian creed tinctured with Christianity, Christ being identical with Mithras (see ante, p. 362), and having come upon earth in an apparent body only to deliver mankind. Manes was the paraclete sent to complete his teaching; the body was evil, and only by long struggle and mortification could man be delivered from it, and reach final blessedness. Those who desired to lead the highest life, *the elect*, abstained from flesh, eggs, milk, fish, wine, and all intoxicating drink, and remained in the strictest celibacy; they were to live on bread, herbs, pulse, and melons, and deny themselves every comfort and every gratification (see pp. 80—82). The Hieracites in Egypt were closely allied with the Manichæans. The Novatians differed from the orthodox only in their refusal to receive again into the Church any who had committed grievous crimes, or who had lapsed during persecution. The Arabians denied the immortality of the soul, maintaining that it died with the body, and that body and soul together would be revivified by God. The controversies on the persons of the Godhead now increased in intensity. Noctus of Smyrna maintained the doctrine of the Patripassians, that God was one and indivisible, and suffered to redeem mankind; Sabellius also taught that God was one, but that Jesus was a man, to whom was united a "certain energy only, proceeding from the Supreme Parent" (p. 83). He also denied the separate personality of the Holy Ghost. Paul of Samosata, Bishop of Antioch, taught a cognate doctrine, and founded the sect of the Paulians or Paulianists, and was consequently degraded from his office. Thus we see that the history of the Church, before it came to power, is

a mass of quarrels and divisions, varied by ignorance and licentiousness. If we exclude Origen, whose writings contain much that is valuable, the works produced by Christian writers in these centuries might be thrown into the sea, and the world would be none the poorer for the loss.

CENTURY IV.

Constantine attained undisputed and sole authority A.D. 324, and in the year 325 he summoned the first general council, that of Nicea, or Nice, which condemned the errors of Arius, and declared Christ to be of the same substance as the Father. This council has given its name to the "Nicene Creed," although that creed, as now recited, differs somewhat from the creed issued at Nice, and received its present form at the Council of Constantinople, A.D. 381. During the reign of Constantine, the Church grew swiftly in power and influence, a growth much aided by the penal laws passed against Paganism. The moment Christianity was able to seize the sword, it wielded it remorselessly, and cut its way to supremacy in the Roman world. Bribes and penalties shared together in the work of conversion. "The hopes of wealth and honours, the example of an emperor, his exhortations, his irresistible smiles, diffused conviction among the venal and obsequious crowds which usually fill the apartments of a palace. The cities, which signalised a forward zeal by the voluntary destruction of their temples, were distinguished by municipal privileges and rewarded with popular donatives; and the new capital of the East gloried in the singular advantage that Constantinople was never profaned by the worship of idols. As the lower ranks of society are governed by imitation, the conversion of those who possessed any eminence of birth, of power, or of riches, was soon followed by dependent multitudes. The salvation of the common people was purchased at an easy rate, if it be true, that, in one year, twelve thousand men were baptised at Rome, besides a proportionable number of women and children; and that a white garment, with twenty pieces of gold, had been promised by the emperor to every convert" (Gibbon's "Decline and Fall," vol. ii. pp. 472, 473). With Constantine began the ruinous system of dowering the Church with State funds. The emperor directed the treasurers of the province of Carthage to pay over to the bishop of that district £18,000 sterling, and to honour his further drafts. Constantine also gave his subjects permission to

bequeath their fortunes to the Church, and scattered public money among the bishops with a lavish hand. The three sons of Constantine followed in his steps, "continuing to abrogate and efface the ancient superstitions of the Romans, and other idolatrous nations, and to accelerate the progress of the Christian religion throughout the empire. This zeal was no doubt, laudable; its end was excellent; but, in the means used to accomplish it, there were many things worthy of blame" (p. 88). Julian succeded to part of the empire in A.D. 360, and to sole authority in A.D. 361. He was educated as a Christian, but reverted to philosophic Paganism, and during his short reign he revoked the special privileges granted to Christianity, and placed all creeds on the most perfect civil equality. Julian's dislike of Christianity, and his philosophic writings directed against it, have gained for him, from Christian writers, the title of "the Apostate." The emperors who succeeded were, however, all Christian, and used their best endeavours to destroy Paganism. Christianity spread apace; "multitudes were drawn into the profession of Christianity, not by the power of conviction and argument, but by the prospect of gain, and the fear of punishment" (p. 102). "The zeal and diligence with which Constantine and his successors exerted themselves in the cause of Christianity, and in extending the limits of the Church, prevent our surprise at the number of barbarous and uncivilised nations, which received the Gospel" (p. 90); and Dr. Mosheim admits that: "There is no doubt but that the victories of Constantine the Great, the fear of punishment, and the desire of pleasing this mighty conqueror and his imperial successors, were the weighty arguments that moved whole nations, as well as particular persons, to embrace Christianity" (p. 91). Fraud, as well as force and favour, lent its aid to the progress of "the Gospel." We hear of the "imprudent methods employed to allure the different nations to embrace the Gospel" (p. 98): "disgraceful" would be a fitter term whereby to designate them, for Dr. Mosheim speaks of "the endless frauds of those odious impostors, who were so far destitute of all principles, as to enrich themselves by the ignorance and errors of the people. Rumours were artfully spread abroad of prodigies and miracles to be seen in certain places (a trick often practised by the heathen priests), and the design of these reports was to draw the populace, in multitudes, to these places, and to impose upon their

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